



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Executive Office of Environmental Affairs

251 Causeway Street, Suite 900

Boston, MA 02114-2119

Mitt Romney
GOVERNOR

Kerry Healey
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

Ellen Roy Herzfelder
SECRETARY

Tel: (617) 626-1000

Fax: (617) 626-1181

or (617) 626-1180

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

May 26, 2004

CONTACT:

Felix Browne 617-626-1119

Ed Coletta 617-292-5737

ROMNEY ADMINISTRATION ADOPTS TOUGHEST-IN-THE-NATION MERCURY STANDARDS FOR COAL-BURNING POWER PLANTS

New regulations require 85% mercury capture by 2008

The Romney Administration today announced new regulations that will significantly limit mercury emissions from the state's four coal-fired power plants as part of Massachusetts' toughest-in-the-nation clean-air rules.

"Massachusetts is at the forefront of efforts to reduce air pollution, and the cleanup of our oldest and highest-emitting power plants is a key component of that effort," said Environmental Affairs Secretary Ellen Herzfelder. "This mercury reduction rule is the next step toward our state and regional goals of reducing overall mercury emissions by 75 percent by 2010, and virtually eliminating the use and release of mercury over the long term."

Under Governor Mitt Romney's direction, the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) and the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) have promulgated a two-phase mercury emissions standard. The first phase requires facilities to capture 85 percent of the mercury contained in combusted coal by January 1, 2008. The second phase requires facilities to capture 95 percent of mercury in combusted coal by October 1, 2012.

"By finalizing these mercury standards today, Massachusetts is making a strong statement that mercury emissions from coal-fired power plants can and must be significantly reduced," said Cindy Luppi, Organizing Director for Clean Water Action. "We applaud the Romney Administration for taking steps to protect our children from this proven neurotoxin, thereby ensuring a healthier future for generations of Bay State children."

Secretary Herzfelder and DEP Commissioner Robert W. Gollidge Jr. released the new mercury regulations at a press conference with partners on the Riverwalk in Lowell. The Merrimack River in the Lowell area is among the 107 rivers, lakes and ponds currently on the state's fish consumption advisory list because of mercury pollution.

-more-

“Massachusetts is implementing the most aggressive mercury reduction programs in the nation,” said Commissioner Gollledge. “We have cut mercury emissions from trash incinerators by 90 percent, eliminated emissions from medical waste incinerators, developed a program to remove dental amalgam mercury from the waste stream and promoted recycling of mercury-based products such as thermometers. These power plant emission rules will further minimize mercury as a pollutant of our valuable natural resources.”

The regulations will apply to four coal-fired power plants: Brayton Point Station in Somerset; Salem Harbor Station in Salem; Mount Tom Station in Holyoke; and NRG Station in Somerset. The two other facilities affected by the state’s comprehensive air pollution regulations – Mystic Station in Everett and Canal Electric in Sandwich – operate on oil and natural gas, not coal.

The mercury regulations are the most recent component of Massachusetts’ rules requiring reductions in the pollutants that cause or contribute to the formation of acid rain, smog, regional haze and mercury deposition. Those rules require the oldest power plants to significantly reduce emissions of sulfur dioxide (SO₂), nitrogen oxides (NO_x), carbon dioxide (CO₂), and mercury.

The power plant emissions standards for other pollutants, adopted in 2001, will reduce annual emissions of SO₂ by up to 75 percent or 84,000 pounds, cut NO_x emissions up to 50 percent or 15,000 tons, and achieve a 10 percent reduction in CO₂ emissions or about 1.9 million tons.

To encourage energy efficiency, today’s mercury regulations limit emission rates based on the amount of electricity generated by the facility. In Phase 1, each facility must reach an 85 percent capture rate, or emit no more than 0.0075 pounds of mercury per net gigawatt-hour of electricity generated, or the equivalent if the facility is closing before 2010. In Phase 2, each facility must reach a 95 percent capture rate, or emit no more than 0.0025 pounds of mercury per net gigawatt-hour of electricity generated.

Mercury pollution is an environmental priority because it can damage the developing brains of infants and children, concentrates in fish, and persists for long periods of time once released into the environment. In July 2001 state health officials issued a statewide advisory warning pregnant women, nursing mothers of reproductive age and children under 12 not to consume any native fish caught in Massachusetts’ freshwater bodies due to the health risk posed by mercury. Certain marine species, such as king mackerel, swordfish and tuna, have been added to the advisory.

The new mercury regulations are available online at:
<http://www.mass.gov/dep/bwp/daqc/daqcpubs.htm#regs>

###